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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2022
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH D/CHOD SEEKS AIR RECON OF IRAQI BORDER

REF: A. ANKARA 1630

- [1](#)B. ANKARA 1300
- [1](#)C. ANKARA 1292

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) The Turkish military would like to conduct air reconnaissance missions up to 10 kilometers inside Iraq over PKK terrorist camps located along the Turkish-Iraqi border, D/CHOD General Saygun told Charge on August 9. Charge reminded Saygun that the US had previously conducted this type of mission to gather information on the PKK which we then shared with Turkey. The reconnaissance flights were stopped in late May following media controversy sparked by a TGS website announcing an unintended violation of Turkish airspace by US aircraft (refs b and c).

[1](#)2. (S/NF) USAFE Commander General Hobbins discussed this issue with CHOD Buyukanit and Air Force Commander Comert in June, noting that we share the daily Air Tasking Order for missions near the border and encouraged greater use of a newly-established direct secure phone line between Turkish military air controllers in Diyarbakir and MNF-1 controllers at al-Udeid (ref a).

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Charge told Saygun that the US had offered to resume our reconnaissance missions if the GOT explicitly wanted us to do so and would work to avoid controversy should inadvertent incursions occur. Saygun said it was not in Turkey's interests for the US to resume the flights, unless we would commit to provide the resulting imagery within a matter of hours. It would be far better, he argued, for Turkish aircraft to fly the missions themselves and then share the resulting intelligence with the US.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Comment. Saygun did not appear to expect a positive response to this query. More likely, he raised the issue to underscore continued TGS pressure for action against the PKK, particularly given the increasingly widespread view that political support for Turkish cross-border action has diminished following the July 22 election and the August 8 visit of Iraqi PM Maliki. Political pressure will quickly build if the PKK conducts a large-scale attack, but in the meantime, the TGS wants to keep beating the drum.

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